

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6033

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to a Washington coastal Dungeness crab pot buoy tag program.

Brief Description: Creating a Washington coastal Dungeness crab pot buoy tag program.

Sponsors: Senator Doumit.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 3/22/05, 3/24/05 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Expands the crab pot buoy tag program from the Puget Sound commercial Dungeness crab fishery to the coastal crab fishery.
- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to assess a fee on the license holders in the commercial coastal Dungeness crab fishery to pay for the buoy tag program.
- Creates a new non-appropriated account.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, DeBolt, Dickerson, Hunt, Orcutt and Williams.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

There are two different closed commercial fisheries for Dungeness crabs in Washington. One fishery is operated for the Puget Sound, and one is limited to coastal waters. To catch crabs commercially, the fisher is required to have a license for the appropriate fishery.

Crab pots are used to catch crab. Each crab pot must be attached to a buoy and fished individually. In the Puget Sound fishery, each buoy must be marked clearly with a tag that contains the name or license number of the person fishing the specific pot. The Department of

Fish and Wildlife (Department) is authorized to charge a fee to the holders of Puget Sound Dungeness crab licenses to pay for the production of the tags and the management of the tag program. Each license holder is entitled to use 100 pots, to which a \$100 annual fee applies. Revenue from the fees are deposited into the Puget Sound Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account, which is a non-appropriated account.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The crab pot buoy tag program is expanded from the Puget Sound commercial Dungeness crab fishery to the commercial coastal fishery. The Department is authorized to charge the holders of coastal Dungeness crab licenses a fee to pay for the production of the buoy tags and the administration of the program. The fees are required to be deposited into the newly created non-appropriated Washington Coastal Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account. Revenue in the new account may only be used for implementing the buoy tag program for the coastal crab fishery. The Department must annually review the last of the tag program, and pass any cost savings onto the license holders.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Requires the Department to annually review the costs involved with producing crab pot buoy tags, and pass any cost savings onto the fishers required to purchase the tags.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill was brought by the industry and the Department in an effort for the industry to regulate itself so that cheating by out-of-state fishers can be avoided. Large out-of-state vessels can currently put local fishers at a competitive disadvantage, and this bill helps to address that imbalance. The state loses revenue when Washington fishers lose crabs due to out-of-state efforts.

The current pot limits are difficult to enforce without the tagging requirement. Recent investigations of crab violations have been very expensive, and the high costs could be avoided with the buoy tags. The state can require tags now, but without the bill, the cost of those tags cannot be passed onto to the fishers. Although there will be a cost to the fishers, that cost will be off-set in part by increases in profit.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Doumit, prime sponsor; Mike Cenci, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.